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Dianism In A Nuit-Shell

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Recently, I got back in touch with my teacher after nearly two years and dropped a couple of bombshells on her: I had changed gender identity and had come together with two other women to form a Dianic coven. When the initial shock wore off, Rita sent me a complete run of Protean Synthesis and a solicitation for this article.

Several years ago I subscribed to several stereotypes regarding "those peculiar Dianics". They were theologically unbalanced, they hated men, they denied that men had souls, they were all lesbians, they couldn't spell (in the orthographic sense; no one has yet accused Dianics of inability to work magick), etc. etc. When I came together with my coven-sisters, I realized that these notions were at most partially true and some cases were patently false.

I believe there are only three valid generalizations that can be made about Dianics: 1) We are all feminists. 2) We all look to the Goddess(es) far more than to the God(s). 3) We are all eclectics. Note well that there are plenty of non-Dianic feminist Witches, non-Dianic eclectics, and non-Dianics who are primarily Goddess-oriented. There are also doubtless a good many feminist, Goddess-oriented eclectics who do not choose to call themselves Dianic. In my own case I use the "If it quacks like a duck, it probably is a duck" argument, as well as the fact that my HPS learned the Craft as a Dianic and runs Dianic rituals.

Some of the stereotypical generalizations I can dismiss out of hand. I don't know of a single Dianic who denies that men have souls. Even Z Budapest doesn't believe that piece of tripe anymore! It is true that Dianism is particularly attractive to separatists, and many separatists actually hate men. Many Dianics are lesbians. Some misspell words like "woman", women", "egalitarian", and "holistic" on purpose. Not all fit these, however, and I think that Z Budapest in her younger, or spiritual bomb-throwing, days represents an extreme and a small minority. There are a number of males involved in Dianism, and some of those are men [NB: I use the terms "man" and "woman" to indicate gender identity, that is, how one's heart, mind, and/or soul are configured. I use "male" and "female" to indicate physical sex, that is, how one's plumbing is configured. I hope this dispels confusion.].

Theological and magickal imbalance is not so easily dismissed and needs to be addressed further, as that is the most valid objection that thoughtful Witches have to Dianism. The apparent imbalance comes from the Dianic emphasis on Goddess-worship, often to the complete exclusion of God-worship. This upsets many Witches' sense of polarity balance. The resolution of this apparent imbalance lies in the consideration of other polarities than sexual and/or gender as the primary polarity. There are indeed many other polarities to consider: true-false, life-

death, dark-light, rational-mystical, creation-destruction, order-chaos, and good-evil, to name but a few. One problem with the masculine-feminine polarity is that there is a strong tendency to express all other polarities in terms of it. The Chinese were particularly fond of this, and mapped everything they liked into the yang side, and everything they disliked or feared into the yin side, the patriarchal no-accounts!

One thing I have discovered is that if you look hard enough, you can find goddesses to fit both ends of most polarities. Some even occupy both ends simultaneously. Inanna, my matron goddess, is a good case in point. She is the Sumerian goddess of love, war, wisdom (which she won in a drinking bout!), adventure, the heavens, the earth, and even of death (in the guise of her dark aspect, Ereshkigal). A very busy lady indeed is Inanna. At this point it becomes largely a matter of personal preference rather than of polarity, whether one chooses a god or a goddess to occupy a particular place in a ritual.

No Dianic I know of denies the existence of the God. Indeed, He gets mentioned as the consort of the Goddess with some frequency in Z Budapest's HOLY BOOK OF WOMEN'S MYSTERIES, which is close a thing as there is to a Dianic version of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. He is there, and sometimes we will invoke Him, when it is appropriate. He makes His own path, and we follow our own, and when they cross naturally we honor Him and do not avoid Him. We also do not force the paths to cross simply to lend an artificial balance to a ritual where none is really needed.

Now that I have spilled a good deal of ink over what Dianism is not, I should now say a few words about what it is: a movement of feminist, eclectic, Goddess-oriented Witches.

Feminism: This covers a vast multitude of virtues and sins. I do not think the stereotypical radical lesbian separatist is as common as is believed. Moderate to liberal feminism is probably far more common, even among Dianics. Certainly my own coven contains no separatists! There are too many nice men out there, even though surveys have shown that 70% or more of all men are potential rapists. The nice ones are found among those who are not in that repulsive majority; you just have to look to find them. One of the places you might find such nice men is in Dianic covens! Some are mixed groups, at least some of those of the branch founded by Morgan McFarland. My own is something of a mixed up group, I suppose. While we do not currently have any men in the coven, two of the three of us were born male and still have original-equipment plumbing. The Goddess and our HPS accept us unreservedly as women.

Eclecticism: If there is one dictum of Z Budapest's that bears repeating to everyone in the Craft, and which gets followed by many, it is "When in doubt, invent." Dianics tend toward creative ritual, drawing from any and all possible sources. I have yet to see a Dianic equivalent of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, nor do I ever hope to see one.

Goddess Orientation: I've discussed this at some length while talking about polarity. There are some wags who have said that Dianics are nothing but matriarchal monotheists. I tell you three times: The Dianic Goddess is NOT Jehovah in drag! The Dianic Goddess is NOT Jehovah in drag! The Dianic Goddess is NOT Jehovah in drag! A much closer analogy would be that Dianics have taken the Classical pantheon and reclaimed most of the roles. This, too, is oversimplifying, but it is not nearly as wide of the mark as the usual criticism. At some point I may write up a long exegesis on the Dianic Goddess, but not here. My own personal involvement with Her comes from a great feeling of comfort I do not find elsewhere. She feels right. I have a great deal of difficulty accepting known rapists (most of the Olympian males are this, especially Zeus, Hades, and Pan!) into my personal pantheon. I also feel a personal vocation from the Mother; it is rather incongruous to me to embrace a male deity wholeheartedly when the Goddess comes to me and calls me Her daughter. This goes doubled, redoubled, in pentacles, and vulnerable for lovers of women.

I hope this little discussion of Dianism-in-a-Nuitshell has proved enlightening to you. It is not a path for everyone, but it is a valid path for some, and in considering it I hope that you can now ignore the garbage that has been put forth in the past as "data" regarding it.

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